



Media Release

Date: January 18,
2011

**PRIVATISING LIQUOR SALES RESULTS IN MORE ALCOHOL-RELATED
DEATHS: NEW RESEARCH**

Private liquor stores are certainly more convenient than the government outlets, since they are open longer hours and there are many more of them, but they are also harming our health. That is according to new research on privatisation of the BC liquor market conducted by the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research (CARBC) and the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, California.

The report, entitled *Impact on alcohol-related mortality of a rapid rise in the density of private liquor outlets in British Columbia: A local area multi-level analysis*, is published today in the international journal *Addiction*. It examines the impact of a dramatic increase in numbers of private liquor stores operating in British Columbia, Canada, since 2003. A number of US jurisdictions are currently considering privatising government control systems for the retail distribution of alcohol, including Pennsylvania, Washington, Virginia, Ohio and North Carolina. Alberta has already fully privatised, QuØbec partially and the issue of privatisation regularly surfaces in public debate in other Canadian provinces.

The study examined 20 types of alcohol-related death including liver disease, strokes, cancers, injuries and suicide in 89 local health areas of British Columbia during a rapid rise in the number of private liquor stores between 2003 and 2008. The number of non-government liquor stores increased by 40.3 per cent to 977 while government store numbers decreased by 10.4 per cent to 199. The study found that areas with more stores in private rather than government hands had significantly higher rates of alcohol-related deaths involving local residents. In fact, there was a 27.5 per cent increase in alcohol-related deaths for every extra private liquor store per 1,000 British Columbians.

"Private liquor stores are superior at maximising sales and hence consumption of alcohol and related harms," says the report's lead author and CARBC Director Dr. Tim Stockwell. "They are also more likely to sell alcohol to underage and intoxicated customers than government stores."

US alcohol policy expert Dr. William Kerr, senior scientist with the California-based Alcohol Research Group, says his own research supports the study's findings. His analysis of US states suggests those with some government control over the alcohol retail market collect more revenue for than those which are fully privatised while generally keeping alcohol sales lower. The US analysis and the new British Columbia study show that government monopolies can both reduce alcohol-related harm

while increasing much-needed government revenue.

A report released by CARBC last month showed that private stores sometimes undercut the fixed prices of government stores and that alcohol is by far the cheapest mood-altering drug in BC.

The paper is available online at

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2010.03331.x/abstract>

--30--

Media Contacts:

Tim Stockwell (UVic Centre for Addictions Research) at office:

250-472-5445 / cell 250-415-7376 or timstock@uvic.ca

Dr. William C. Kerr (Senior Scientist, Alcohol Research Group) at

510-597-3440 or wkerr@arg.org

Dr. Andrew Treno (Senior Scientist, Prevention Research Centre, Pacific

Institute for Research and Evaluation, CA) at 510-919-5262 or

Andrew@PREV.org

Maria Lironi (UVic Communications) at 250-721-6139 or lironim@uvic.ca

Follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/uvicnews>

UVic Communications Services, PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2
Tel. (250) 721-7636 Fax (250) 721-8955 E-Mail: ucom@uvic.ca